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ABSTRACT

In response to the academic needs revealed by students' reading scores and faculty perceptions of students' skill deficiencies, Sacramento City College (SCC) developed two programs of integrated skills and content instruction. Using a team-teaching format, the HELP (Higher Education Learning Package) and Adjunct programs seek improvement of students' basic skills and personal development through an interdisciplinary approach. The HELP model involves a content course, developmental reading and writing courses, and a counseling component. Adjunct classes involve team-taught courses focusing on reading, writing, and study skills practice using the content area. Basic skills instruction in these programs emphasizes finding the main idea of a passage, studying reading methods, taking notes, paraphrasing, outlining, developing vocabulary, learning library research skills, and other areas. While the HELP program covers all of these skills, due to its more limited time, the Adjunct class covers only two or three skills in depth and briefly goes over the remaining skills. Evaluative studies of these programs reveal an increase in students' reading skills, a more positive approach toward learning tasks, and increased self-confidence. While difficulties do exist in integrated skills and content instruction, the approach is beneficial not only to students, but also to instructors, who are given an opportunity to learn techniques to help their students succeed in college. (AYC)

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March 1983

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JC 830 353

"It's Not My Job" - - Basic
Skill Development in a Sociology
Course, a Shared Solution.

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So often the refrain "It's not my job! Students should be able to read and write by the time they come to my class," is heard throughout the community college faculty. The statement reflects many instructors' frustrations with the realization that a large number of their students are not prepared to deal competently with the reading and writing assignments required of them in their regular college classes. Is this actually true and, if so, what can community college instructors do about it?

An active assessment program at Sacramento City College, an inner city college of approximately 15,492 students, revealed that, in the Fall of 1982, 60.1% of the students who were assessed (55.9% of the student body) read at or below the 13th grade level as measured by the Stanford Test of Academic Skills (TASK); 10.86% of these students read at or below the 7th grade level.

Sacramento City College operationally defines a score of below 13th grade level on the TASK test as a "below college level" score, or a developmental skill level. The traditional approach toward the students who score below this level at Sacramento City College and on many community college campuses has been to offer remedial and developmental reading courses for skill improvement. Through study of the Assessment Center data, however, it was discovered that a large discrepancy exists between the number of students who are eligible for reading classes and those who actually enroll. Of the 1577 eligible in the Fall of 1982, only 254 enrolled. Where, therefore, do these students go?

The most likely answer is that they enroll in classes on the college campus that do not require assessment scores as prerequisites for entry. A study of the reading scores of the assessed students in classes not requiring assessment (done in Spring

1981 semester) lends support to this conclusion. A list of several content courses follows, showing that the mean grade equivalent score of assessed students in these content classes is 10th or 11th grade levels.

Course	Raw Score	Grade Equivalent Score
Biology 1A	53.0	11th grade
Chemistry 1A	53.8	11th grade
Geography 2	47.6	10th grade
Health Education 1	48.4	10th grade
History 4, 5, 9, 10	51.5	10th grade
History 14, 15, 16	43.3	10th grade
Political Science 1	50.5	10th grade
Psychology 1	50.6	10th grade
Sociology 3	45.4	10th grade

A readability study of most of the textbooks used on the City College Campus was completed in 1981. It was discovered that 60% of these texts had a readability level of 12th grade and above. It is interesting to note that 49.74% of the assessed students read at or below the 12th grade level. Although readability studies and standardized tests do not measure identical abilities, the question should be asked, "Is student performance affected by the use of textbooks of a readability level higher than the students' measured reading performance?"

There is no clear answer to this question; however, a look at the reading scores for successful students in content classes at Sacramento City College reveals that there is a pattern of positive relationship between reading scores and grades received in content classes.

Representative examples follow:

		Grade Received: A	B	C	D
Humanities 1	(raw score)	62.0	59.7	60.0	49.5
	(grade eq. score)	13th	12th	13th	10th
Technology 60		66.3	61.0	54.0	50.0
		13th	13th	11th	10th
Family & Consumer Science		64.1	57.7	49.4	49.2
		13th	12th	10th	10th

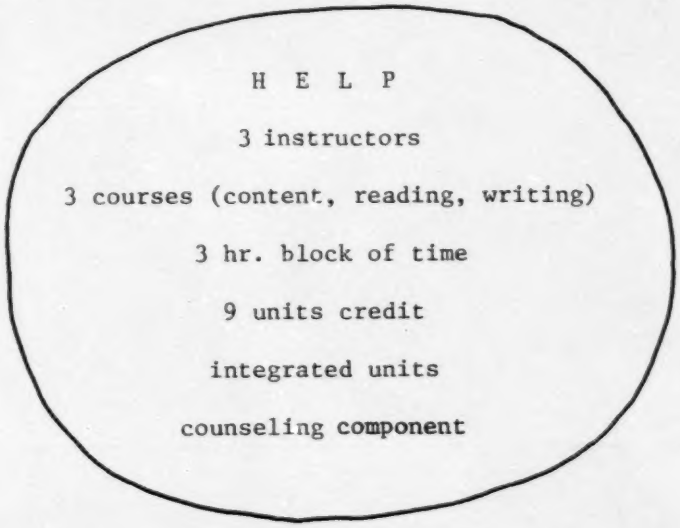
These scores do not indicate that a student with a 10th grade score could not achieve an A grade in one of these classes. They do reveal, however, the general tendency or pattern of students with lower reading scores to be less successful in course grades than students with higher scores.

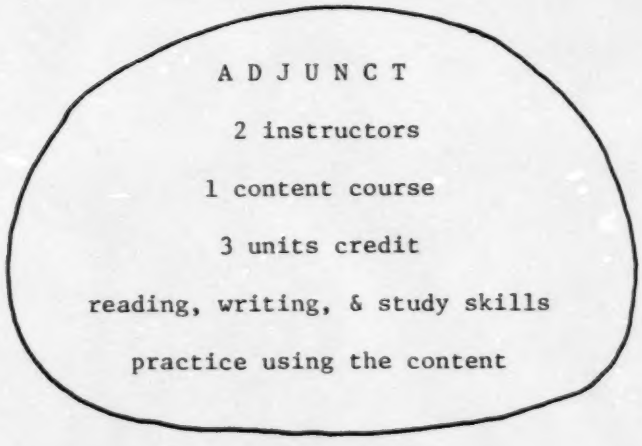
In order to determine whether faculty also perceived this pattern, a questionnaire was circulated to the entire social science faculty on campus. They were asked to answer questions regarding their students' skills in relationship to course success and learning. Ninety (90) percent of the faculty responded. Of these, over 85% indicated that a significant percentage of their students experienced difficulty in understanding the course reading material and in writing responses to questions asked in class. Most of these instructors also made it clear that they felt uncomfortable and inexperienced in dealing with reading, writing, and study skills within their classes.

In response to the academic need made evident by the consideration of student reading scores given above and the faculty perceptions of student skill difficulties, Sacramento City College has developed two programs of integrated skills and content instruction. Using a team teaching format the "HELP" (Higher Education Learning Package) and the "Adjunct" programs seek improvement of students' basic skills and personal development through an interdisciplinary educational setting.

The HELP model involves 3 instructors in 3 separate courses, (a content course, in this case, sociology; a developmental writing course; and a developmental reading course), combined into a 3 hour block of time 3 days per week for 9 units of credit. A personal development/study skills course is offered on the other two days of the week for a total of 12 units for the entire program.

Adjunct classes involve one content course team taught by 2 instructors, a content instructor and a basic skills instructor, for 3 units credit. Basic skills instruction in both the Adjunct and HELP programs centers around the information and reading materials of the content class. Assignments and practice exercises deal directly with concepts and requirements of the content area. The desired impact of both programs is improvement of the students' grasp of basic skills as well as facilitation of the understanding of subject area material. A diagram of each model follows:





The major difference between the two models is the amount of time allotted within the course structure for skills development. The HELP programs allows the reading and writing instructors the amount of class time equivalent to a regular developmental course while the Adjunct program requires that the skills instructor intersperse skills instruction into the already existing content course. Skills instruction, therefore, is more complete and extensive in the HELP program.

Goals of each program include the integration of skills instruction and content instruction, the promotion of retention through cognitive as well as attitudinal development, and provision of a supportive learning environment. The HELP program, which is designed primarily for high-risk, non-traditional students, has as its additional goal the maintstreaming of high risk students into regular college courses.

Instruction in the basic skills, when integrated with the content curriculum, involves the teaching of a wide variety of skills. In the HELP program, the reading instructor covers skills such as: (1) Finding the main idea (using the content textbook); (2) Study reading method (SQ3R & other techniques); (3) Making margin notes in the text; (4) Making cognitive maps; (5) Paraphrasing; (6) Outlining; (7) Making valid inferences; (8) Using flashcards and test summary sheets; (9) Note-taking; (10) Memory improvement; (11) Vocabulary development; (12) Summarization; (13) Library research. The writing instructor concentrates on grammar, spelling, sentence and paragraph development and organization of a research paper.

Because time is more limited within the Adjunct class, the skills instructor is usually able to cover only two or three skills in depth and briefly go over the remaining skills. What will be covered more heavily is a decision that is made based upon the expressed needs of both the students and the content instructors.

Evaluative studies of the HELP program done by the Sacramento City College Assessment Center, under the auspices of Dr. Dorothy Bohr, Associate Dean of Administration and Dr. Dorothy Bray, Dean of the Division of Languages and Literature,

claim that HELP students attempted more units in subsequent semesters, had higher GPA's and had better retention rates than a control group. The reading instructors pre and post testing of students on a standardized reading test, TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) indicate an increase in student mean scores of at least one grade level. Perhaps more significant is the students' marked attitudinal change. Informal pre and post attitudinal surveys reveal an increased positive approach of the students toward learning tasks and toward themselves as learners. Attitudinal surveys in the Adjunct classes also indicate positive responses to skills instruction and increased self-confidence in skill tasks.

Difficulties, however, do exist in integrated skills and content instruction: (1) Content instructors have to be willing to focus on process rather than acquisition of information. Less material, than is usually completed in one semester of the content class, is covered when skills instruction is integrated with the course content. (2) The teams of instructors need to be compatible in educational philosophies and consistent in classroom policies. Time is needed for team planning sessions including goal setting, discussion of approaches, calendaring, and sharing of concerns. (3) In the Adjunct program students may initially react negatively to working on skills without receiving credit for a skills course. However, the Adjunct instructors at Sacramento City College have found by the end of the semester that, on the whole, students become grateful for the additional educational experience.

Conclusion:

The HELP and Adjunct programs are two models of effective integration of content and skills instruction. Integration of basic skills with content instruction offers the student the opportunity to immediately apply skill acquisition to a relevant learning situation. Skills are not learned in an isolated remedial or developmental class with materials that are different from their regular course assignment.

These models of integrated instruction are applicable to almost any type of content course on any community college campus. They are not only beneficial to students but also to instructors who are given the opportunity to learn and experience techniques which will aid their students in the acquisition of skills necessary for success in college.

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